DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 063 270 SP 005 742

AUTHOR Horton, Robert; Bryan, Clifford
TITLE Accountability and Teacher Satisfaction.
PUB DATE [71]
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Early Childhood Education; *Educational Accountability; *Effective Teaching; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Responsibility

ABSTRACT

The relationship between accountability and teacher satisfaction is examined both from the teachers' perceptions of accountability and the concomitant effects. The research was conducted in the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Public School System as part of a larger evaluation of "Experiments in Early Education: A Comparative Assessment of Project Follow-Through, Project Read and the Basal Reading Program." The sample was composed of 64 teachers from three different programs: 21 from a high acccuntability group, 15 from a medium group, and 28 from a low accountability group. The research covered 1) the extent of satisfaction with accountability, by program; 2) teachers' perceptions of extent of accountability by program; 3) identification of source of pressures for accountability, by program; 4) extent of pressures for accountability from administrative and parental sources, by program; 5) extent of work created by level of accountability; 6) the effect of level of accountability upon teacher effectiveness and sense of professionalism; and 7) the satisfaction with in-service training, cooperation of supervisors, and supervisors evaluation process, by level of accountability and program. Results indicated that greater accountability may increase a teacher's sense of effectiveness and professionalism, in-service training along with positive assistance from supervisors may increase satisfaction and teacher effectiveness, and regarding the placement of teachers into contract learning or highly structured programs, preference toward less experienced teachers may be warranted. (MJM)

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Accountability and Teacher Satisfaction

Robert Horton
Western Michigan University

Clifford Bryan
Idaho State University

Department of Sociology
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
49001

SP 003 743

With the emerging tide of increased pressures for teacher and administrative responsibility within education (particularly with the innovation of contract learning), the subject of teacher accountability has assumed new significance. In the past it was felt that there was little that a teacher could do about student ability since a student's performance was limited by his inherent capacity as determined by certain genetic qualities. However, the perspectives in education today are drastically changing; increasingly the responsibility for student performance is being placed upon the teacher and school system.

Little is known, however, about the effects of increased teacher accountability upon the teacher, the school system, or the student. It is the purpose of this analysis to examine the relationship between accountability and teacher satisfaction, both from the teachers' perceptions of accountability and the concomitant effects.[1]

Method

Accountability can be defined in many ways for various purposes. A teacher, for example, may be held accountable by the school administration for her classroom behavior, by the public for teaching methods or subject content, or to the student for his performance. For the purpose of this paper, teacher accountability refers to the extent to which a teacher is directly held responsible for her students' performance and achievement. In other words, the term as used here and as defined for the teacher sample, places direct responsibility upon the teacher for the students' performance.

Sixty-four teachers from three different programs were randomly selected for the sample: 21 from Follow-Through (high accountability group), 15 from Project Read (medium group), and 28 from Basal Reading (low accountability group).

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[1] This research was conducted as part of a larger evaluation of "Experiments in Early Education: A Comparative Assessment of Project Follow-Through, Project Read and the Basal Reading program," Office of Testing and Evaluation, Grand Rapids Public Schools, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971.

The programs were tri-chotomized into high (Follow-Through), medium (Project Read), and low (Basal Reading) accountability groups.

The teachers responses were first examined by frequency, cross-tabulation, Chi-square, and theta analysis in order to ascertain the basic parameters and characteristics of the sample.

Findings

As shown in Table 1, teachers in general were satisfied with the level of accountability they had in their respective program. Over 80% of all groups expressed satisfaction, and none expressed strong dissatisfaction.

Table 1

Extent of Satisfaction with Accountability, by Program

	Quite Satisfied	(N)	Reasonably Satisfied	(N)	Dissatisfied	(N)	Quite Dissatisfied	(N)	Not Accountable	(N)	
Follow-Through	33%	7	43%	9	19%	4	0%	0	5%	1	100%
Project Read	33%	5	47%	7	20%	3	0%	0	0%	0	100%
Basal Reading	28%	8	68%	19	4%	1	0%	0	0%	0	100%

In order to ascertain whether there were actual differences in the levels of accountability by program, teachers were asked if they felt they were held more accountable because of their school program. Table 2 shows marked differences in perceptions of extent of accountability by program. Over 95% of the Follow-Through teachers (high accountability group) felt they were held more or much more accountable because of their program, as opposed to 40% of the Project Read teachers and

only 10% of the Basal Reading group (low accountability group). The large majority of the Basal Reading group teachers (38%) felt that no additional accountability was connected with their classroom program.

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions of Extent of Accountability, by Program Type

	Much More		More		Less		None		
		(N)		(N)		(N)		(N)	
Follow-Through	52%	11	43%	9	5%	1	0%	0	100%
Project Read	13%	2	26%	4	6%	1	53%	8	100%
Basal Reading	4%	1	8%	2	4%	1	83%	23	100%
	$X^2 = 37.3$		$P > .001$		$df = 6$		$\theta = .66$		

The nearly unanimous reports of high accountability by Follow-Through teachers and the feeling of no impact by Basal Reading teachers provides a substantial basis for the basic assumption of trichotomizing the groups into high, medium, and low accountability groups. This finding, when contrasted with Table 1, provides an interesting and important observation: although there are definite differences in levels of accountability of the programs, there are no significant differences in the teachers' reports of satisfaction. The pressures of high accountability do not create more dissatisfaction. This finding is in direct contradiction to what one would conclude from the literature relating to teacher surveillance; i.e., generally teachers do not like close critical surveillance by administrators or the public, and greater accountability inherently must bring more surveillance.[2] However, accountability and surveillance, though related, are different dimensions and this contradiction suggests there is some indigenous quality in accountability that neutralizes the antagonistic elements of surveillance.

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[2] Surveillance can also be defined in several ways. Generally, and as used here, it refers to critical observance of the teachers' performance.

Further analysis as to the source of accountability showed basically similar findings, varying only in extent. While Project Read teachers felt somewhat more pressure from fellow teachers, Follow-Through teachers felt more pressure from their supervisors. (See Tables 3 and 4.) Basal Reading (low accountability group) teachers felt only moderate pressure from both sources. These differences are partially and plausably explained by differences in structure of the programs. The Follow-Through program was much more highly structured with a more elaborate supervisory heirarchy than other groups (the teacher-administration ratio was almost three to one). Thus it might be expected that they would perceive more pressure from supervisory sources.

Table 3

Identification of Source of Pressures for Accountability, by Program

	Administration		Parents		Fellow Teachers		
		(N)		(N)		(N)	
Follow-Through	85%	18	5%	1	10%	2	100%
Project Read	40%	6	13%	2	46%	7	100%
Basal Reading	44%	12	18%	5	18%	5	100%

$X^2 = 10.8$ P >.05 df = 4 $\theta = .32$

Table 4

Extent of Pressures for Accountability From Administrative and Parental Sources, by Program

	Administrative Sources								Parental Sources							
	Very		Moderate		Unsure		None		Very		Moderate		Unsure		None	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Follow-Through	71	15	19	4	9	2	0	0	52	11	28	6	14	3	5	1
Project Read	46	7	26	4	26	4	0	0	80	12	13	2	6	1	0	0
Basal Reading	36	10	50	14	14	4	0	0	21	6	61	17	14	4	3	1

$\theta = .23$ X^2 = N.S. $X^2 = 15.4$ P > .05 $\theta = .36$

Project Read teachers, however, had significantly more parental contact than teachers in other programs (most prominently because more Follow-Through students were bussed than Project Read students). Thus pressures for teacher performance were felt from both administrators and parents.

In order to ascertain the effects of accountability per se, two different approaches were utilized: cross-tabulation and the Automatic Interaction Detection Program.

First, it is important to examine the relationship between levels of accountability and their effects upon the teacher. The total teacher sample was dichotomized into high and low accountability groups according to program. An examination of Table 5 shows that 28% of teachers in the high group felt their level of accountability had increased their work load considerably, as opposed to only 3% for the low group. Accountability does appear both logically and statistically to require more effort for teachers. More accountability means more testing, more preparation, and more supervision of students. However, this finding, when contrasted with Table 1, is interesting; although more accountability means more work, there is not a corresponding decrease in satisfaction. Thus, some intervening variable may be causing satisfaction to increase with higher levels of accountability.

Table 5

Extent of Work Created by Level of Accountability

	Considerably More		Some More		Less		None	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
High	28	6	52	11	0	0	9	2
Low	3	1	54	15	3	1	36	10

$X^2 = 9.4$ $P > .01$ $df = 3$ $\theta = .45$

As a check on this discrepance, the related variables of teaching effectiveness and sense of professionalism were examined in Table 6. The high accountability group responded more positively than the low group: 47% (vs. 32%) felt that high

accountability had improved their teaching performance and corresponding sense of professionalism, although a significant portion of the group (28%) felt it had a negative impact.

Table 6

Effect of Level of Accountability Upon Teacher Effectiveness and Sense of Professionalism

	Improved Effectiveness and Professionalism		Reduced Effectiveness and Professionalism		No Response	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
High Acct.	47	11	28	6	25	5
Low Acct.	32	8	4	1	64	16

As a precautionary measure, several other variables were examined: (1) satisfaction with in-service training, (2) the cooperation of supervisors, and (3) the supervisors' evaluation process. On each of these variables, no strong source of dissatisfaction was discovered for the high accountability group. However, the low accountability group expressed strong dissatisfaction with the in-service training and supervisors cooperation. To further confirm this, theta values (.47 and .74 for each respective group) suggested the relationship was quite stable. The high satisfaction expressed by the high accountability group suggests the possibility that the extra in-service training, along with the assistance and cooperation of supervisors, may be a major factor in increasing satisfaction with greater accountability. The limited size of the sample prevents any confirmation of this hypothesis.

Table 7

Satisfaction with In-Service Training, Cooperation of Supervisors, and Supervisors Evaluation Process, by Level of Accountability and Program

	In-Service Training				Supervisors Cooperation				Supervisors Evaluation Process			
	Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
High	79	15	21	4	86	18	14	3	80	16	20	4
Low	32	8	68	17	12	3	88	22	76	19	24	6
	θ = .47				θ = .74				θ = .04			

Thus, on the basis of cross-tabulation, Chi-square, and theta analysis, it would appear that greater accountability tends to (1) increase teacher satisfaction, (2) increase the work load required for teachers, and (3) improve the teachers' sense of effectiveness and professionalism. Further, satisfaction with high accountability appears to be associated with in-service training and the cooperation of supervisors.

Although the previous analysis gives several significant insights into the effects of levels of accountability upon teacher satisfaction, we do not yet know the exact relationship of each variable to the other. In addition, within the variables examined thus far, accountability and program are inseparably linked together. One cannot be sure whether it is satisfaction with the level of accountability, or the program that is being measured. It is thus desirable to separate these two variables and assess the impact of each one upon teacher satisfaction. To best accomplish this, an Automatic Interaction Detection analysis was conducted.[3]

The AID analysis allows each of a selection of independent variables to be considered both separately and to compete with each other variable to determine its relative importance in explaining the variation in the dependent variable. In this fashion, only the most influential variables would emerge from the competition to explain variation in the extent of satisfaction associated with teachers levels of accountability. Teacher satisfaction was measured on a scale ranging from 1- (quite satisfied) to 4- (quite dissatisfied). Program type is allowed to "float" as an independent variable which can enter at any time to explain satisfaction with level of accountability.

The variable that "explains" the most variations in teachers' satisfaction with their level of accountability is the success and effectiveness of the program in use in the school. The variable split into high ($\bar{X}$ = 1.5) and low ($\bar{X}$ = 2.3) groups

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[3] Sonquist, John A., and Morgan, James N.; The Detection of Interaction Effects, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1964.

according to the satisfaction associated with the program's success. If teachers felt their academic program was effectively achieving its goals and objectives, teachers were quite satisfied with being held accountable.

This finding is not really surprising. Success has many partners, but failure has none. However, the immediate emergence of this variable at least lends validity to the structure of the analysis.

For teachers who felt their program was not achieving its objectives (parent group 3, $\overline{X} = 2.3$), the most prominent concern was their students' interest in their school work (groups 8 and 9). The most dissatisfaction ($\overline{X} = 2.8$) was expressed when students were indifferent to their school work. Teachers were willing to accept accountability when students had high interest in school work even though they did not feel the program was accomplishing its objectives.

When teachers felt their program was accomplishing its objectives (parent group 2, $\overline{X} = 1.5$), high satisfaction with level of accountability, the next most prominent concern was the evaluation process utilized by their superiors. Teachers were divided in their satisfaction with their accountability by the frequency that supervisors discussed classroom problems with them (groups 4 and 5). Project Read and Follow-Through teachers were more satisfied with their supervisors' evaluation process than were Basal Reading teachers. Follow-Through teachers also met with their supervisors much more often, while Basal Reading teachers rarely discussed classroom problems with supervisors.

Group 4 teachers (who expressed the most satisfaction up to this point in the analysis) were capable of further splitting by the number of years of teaching (groups 6 and 7). Less experienced teachers (less than 10 years teaching) were more willing to accept accountability and were more concerned ($\overline{X} = 1.1$ vs. 1.7) with discussing classroom problems with supervisors than more experienced teachers (over 10 years teaching). However, experience should not be equated with age. There was no information to justify this connection.

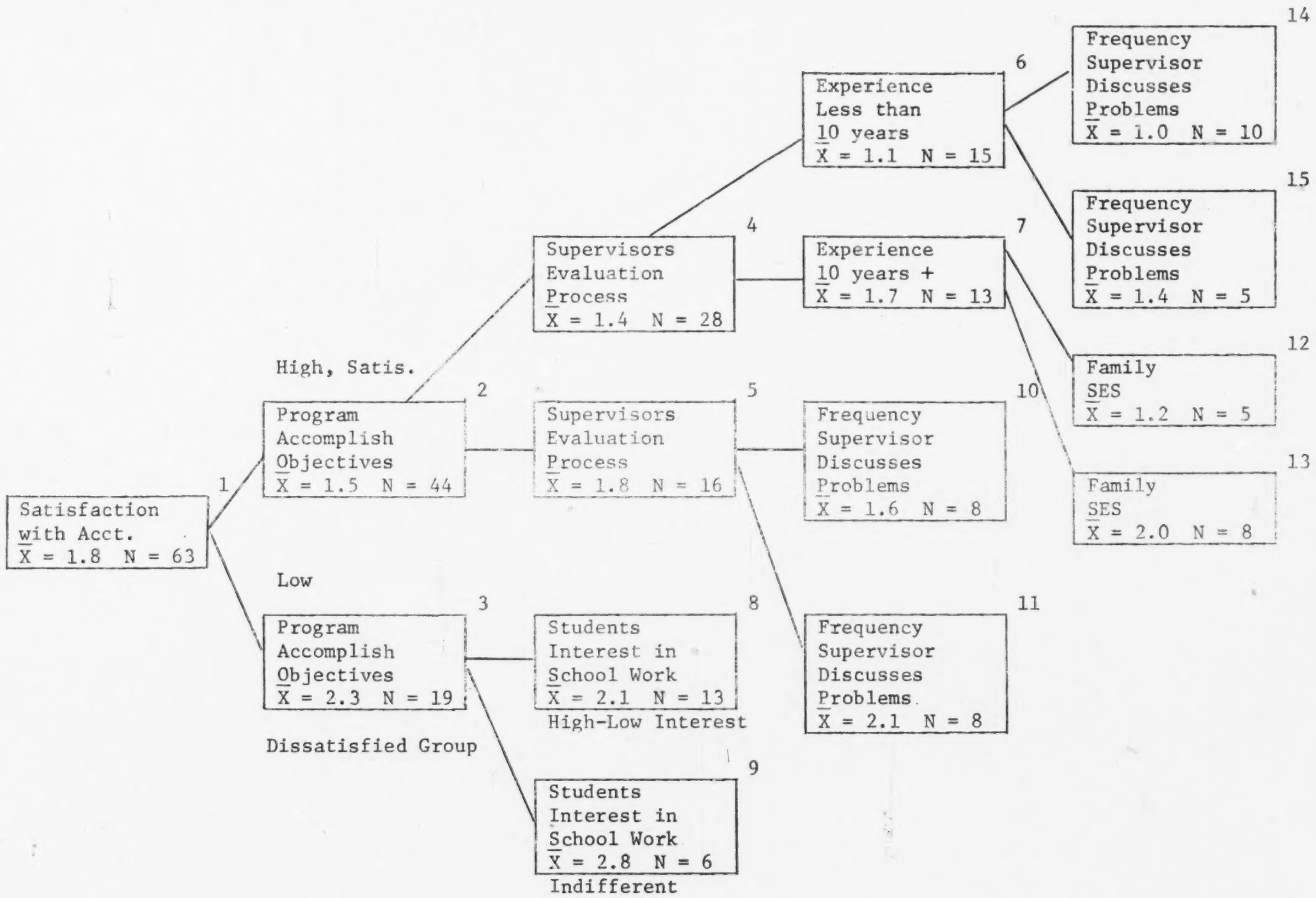
It was also noted that socio-economic status accounted for a major portion of the difference in satisfaction among teachers of long standing (groups 12 and 13). Teachers with spouses employed at lower occupational prestige levels expressed much greater satisfaction, suggesting that they had possibly reached the pinnacle of progress of their career. Their achievement had surpassed that of other members of the immediate family, perhaps giving limited incentive for greater advancement.

Higher SES teachers, however, had a different reference group. Compared to other family members, their achievement was nominal, perhaps creating less satisfaction with career progress. It should be noted, however, that the variable of socioeconomic status accounts only for final groups, both of rather small cell size, indicating that the differences though real are rather small.

Conclusion

Teachers in general were quite satisfied with the level of accountability they held in their position. There was only small variation in satisfaction by programs and levels of accountability ($\overline{X}$ = 1.7 to 2.1). However, considering that there is a considerable difference in the level of accountability required by the different programs, this lack of difference is significant.

On the basis of this report, one could predict that the current trend toward greater accountability in education does not necessarily create more dissatisfaction among teachers. On the contrary, this analysis suggests that greater accountability may increase a teacher's sense of effectiveness and professionalism. The additional in-service training along with positive assistance from supervisors may be the intervening factors that increase satisfaction and teacher effectiveness. Further, in the placement of teachers into contract learning or highly structured experimental programs, some tentative preference toward less experienced teachers may be warranted.


Satisfaction with Acct. X = 1.8 N = 63
1
High, Satis.
Low
Dissatisfied Group
Program Accomplish Objectives X = 1.5 N = 44
2
Program Accomplish Objectives X = 2.3 N = 19
3
Supervisors Evaluation Process X = 1.4 N = 28
4
Supervisors Evaluation Process X = 1.8 N = 16
5
Students Interest in School Work X = 2.1 N = 13
8
High-Low Interest
Students Interest in School Work X = 2.8 N = 6
9
Indifferent
Experience Less than 10 years X = 1.1 N = 15
6
Experience 10 years + X = 1.7 N = 13
7
Frequency Supervisor Discusses Problems X = 1.6 N = 8
10
Frequency Supervisor Discusses Problems X = 2.1 N = 8
11
Frequency Supervisor Discusses Problems X = 1.0 N = 10
14
Frequency Supervisor Discusses Problems X = 1.4 N = 5
15
Family SES X = 1.2 N = 5
12
Family SES X = 2.0 N = 8
13

11